

# PRECISE WORD CHOICE



**GRADE 4-5**

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# Classroom Procedure:

1. Display the following sentences: There is a woman. There is a cat. There is a tree. Ask the students what is happening in your story. Allow for response and discussion. Ask the students if your story was exciting, then ask them why or why not. Lead students to explain that in the sentences, the audience does not know who the characters are or what they are doing. Ask the students: How can you make this story better? Talk with a peer, and then share your new story with the class.
2. Point out how students added precise and specific language to their stories to make the story clearer and more interesting. The audience understands what was happening.
3. Distribute the *Precise Word Choice* content page. Read and review the information with the students. Save the final questions for the lesson closing. Use the additional resources to enhance understanding in and out of the classroom.
4. Distribute the Activity page. Read and review the instructions. Have students share their sensory language paragraphs with a partner. Allow time for completion.
5. Once completed, have students share their stories with the class. Point out what precise and specific language they are using in their stories. Ask the students how they can use their senses to understand what each other's homes are like.
7. Distribute the Practice page. Check and review the students' responses.
8. Distribute the Homework page. The next day, check and review the students' responses.
9. In closing, ask students: What is precise and specific language, and why is it important in writing? Why is it important to be concise when writing? How can sensory language help readers to understand what the writer is saying?

Lesson Title: **Precise Word Choice**

**Subject:** Language Arts

**Approximate Grade Level:** 4 - 5

**Objectives:** Students will identify and understand the precise and specific word choice. Students will comprehend the importance of precise and concise writing by being specific and accurate without adding unneeded information. Students will apply their knowledge by writing a paragraph with concise and accurate wording, along with sensory language. Students will learn to edit sentences and paragraphs to make them more precise and concise.

**State Educational Standards\***

LB.ELA.LITERACY.W.4.2 and LB.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.D

**Class Sessions (45 minutes):**

2 class sessions

**Teaching Materials/Worksheets:** *Precise Word Choice* content pages (2), Activity page, Practice page, Homework page

**Student Supplies:** Content page (2), Activity page (2), Practice page (2), and the Homework page (6).

**Prepare Ahead of Time:** Copy handouts.

**Options for Lesson:** An excellent introduction or culminating lesson is to have students play the board game, Scrabble. The game emphasizes word choice and requires students to create words. An electronic version of the game is available at <https://www.scrabblegames.info/> Scrabble Online.

\*Lessons are aligned to meet the education objectives and goals of most states. For more information on your state objectives, contact your local Board of Education or Department of Education in your state.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# Precise Word Choice

## Writing Precise Words

When writing, it is essential to be as clear as possible. When doing so, you need to use precise and specific language. This will help ensure that you are delivering a specific message to your audience.

### Precise Words

In expository or informative writing, your purpose is to thoroughly explain the answer to a question or how something works. For instance, let's say it is the beginning of the school year, and your teacher wants to get to know you. She or he might ask you to write an answer to some get to know you questions like "Please describe your family and your pets."

What if your response was, "I have a sibling and a pet." Is that using precise and specific language? That doesn't tell the teacher very much about you, does it? Your teacher doesn't know how many siblings you have. You may have a brother or a sister, and they won't know if your sibling is older or younger than you. They know that you have a pet, but they have no clue what kind of pet you own. Your pet could be a dog, a cat, a bird, or even a worm.

Instead, if your answer was "I have a three-year-old sister name Grace," that will give your teacher specific information about your sibling. "I have a two-year-old bird named Poncho. He is a Senegal parrot and is bright green," that gives your teacher a lot more information about your pet. These answers are more precise and specific.

## Readers should never wonder what you are trying to say.

A good tip is after you have written something, ask someone you know to read what you have written. Then ask that person to tell you what the essay is about. If they can't tell you in a few words what they have read, then you need to go back and make it clearer.

You may have to use a Thesaurus to help you change some of your words. A thesaurus is a book containing synonyms and similar words. It's like a dictionary but usually without all of the definitions and details found in dictionaries.

It is up to you to make sure you fully explain your answers and use precise language in your writing so that the audience does not have any questions. Explanatory and informative writing is common in school, and you will continue to write more and more as you grow up. You will write to show others what you know and use the knowledge in your head to help others.

## Writing Precise Words

### Concise Language

Concise means the shortest and clearest sentence possible. While it is important that you are clear and specific with your words and answers, it is also important to make sure that you don't include too much information or add in extra words. You do not want to add information that doesn't belong. When answering a question, you need to stick to that particular question, not add more details to it. There is a balance between having too much and not having enough information for the reader.

For example,

let's say that someone asks you to write down your *favorite food*. What if your response is "junk food." It is concise, but the sentence isn't precise, is it? That doesn't tell the audience what your favorite food is because there are lots of different types of junk food.

If you revise your answer and write: "My favorite food is chocolate ice cream. But I only like my chocolate ice cream in a cone, not a dish. I like it plain, but I do like sprinkles. I don't like whip cream on it or cherries. I also don't like any type of fish for dinner." Whoa! The answer includes your favorite food, which is chocolate ice cream, but it also contains a lot of added and unnecessary information. Was this answer confusing and hard to follow? When you add too much information and don't specifically answer the question, then you are not concise.

### Sensory Language

When writing, sometimes describing things using the five senses, helps the reader to understand what you are trying to say. Readers can see, hear, feel, smell, and even taste what you are describing to them. People connect to a text when a writer uses sensory details because they can relate to it and understand it. If you say your wall is blue, that seems very common. If you say that your wall is the color of a clear pristine ocean, then readers can picture that picture in their heads. They can connect to it. They have either seen an ocean or have seen images of it.

Being precise and concise is critical when writing. Using specific word choice and sensory details will make the audience understand what you are discussing and explaining. Not adding extra information will help them stay focused on what you have to say about the topic. Think of writing like packing a suitcase. You only pack exactly the items you need. Too much, you can't close the top. Too little, you don't have what you need for your trip.



**Instructions:** Write an explanatory and informative paragraph about your home. Make sure you are using precise and specific language, as well as sensory details. Describe your home so the audience can picture it in their minds.

First, jot down some ideas for each sense to include in the description of your home.

- Visual Imagery (Sight) - \_\_\_\_\_
- Auditory Imagery (Hearing) - \_\_\_\_\_
- Tactile Imagery (Touch) - \_\_\_\_\_
- Gustatory Imagery (Taste) - \_\_\_\_\_
- Olfactory Imagery (Smell) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Now, use your sensory notes, write a paragraph about your home. Make sure you are using precise word choice and stick to the topic. When finished, have a partner read it and find places where you can be more specific when describing your home.**

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# Practice

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions** - Below are some very vague sentences, and their meaning is unknown. Rewrite the following sentences with specific and precise language. An example is done for you.

1. It is hot out. \_\_\_\_\_ It is one hundred and one degrees outside. I am sweating.
2. The man walked. \_\_\_\_\_
3. That person is nice. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The human left. \_\_\_\_\_
5. That was fun. \_\_\_\_\_
6. It is good. \_\_\_\_\_
7. He went there. - \_\_\_\_\_
8. She is cool. \_\_\_\_\_
9. He got it from work. \_\_\_\_\_
10. It is at 10:00. \_\_\_\_\_

**Below is an advertisement for dinner at a local restaurant. The announcement is unclear. Fix it, so customers know what they will be getting when they order.**

Come in. This deal is cheap. A plate full will be little money. You get meat, a starch, a vegetable, and a fruit. For the extra money, you get a dessert. We have drinks too. We have lots of drinks.

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# Homework

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Instructions:** Read the paragraphs below. Make sure they are concise and precise. Rewrite the paragraphs making them precise and concise.

Sea turtles are interesting animals. They are interesting because of their features. Sea turtles have flippers. They help them swim. According to Sea World, a sea turtle's flippers help them. Sea turtles are awkward on land. Sea turtles have other characteristics and features that make them who they are. They have heads. A sea turtles' head helps it. An article written by marine biologists at Sea World explains that their eyelids help them. They protect them. They have strong jaws. This helps them. This is very helpful for them. They eat. There is another characteristic and feather about sea turtles. They have a shell. It is unique. It helps them. It helps them from predators. There are lots of cool features about sea turtles.

Recycling is important. It helps the environment. People can recycle. They can recycle in their homes. They can recycle at other places. There are many places where people can recycle. There is a problem. Many people do not recycle. People are throwing away paper. People are throwing away plastic. This is wrong. It is important to recycle. People need to know what to recycle. It is important.

Where should whales be? Should whales be in the ocean? Should whales be in glass cages? Many whales are taken out of their environment. They are put in glass tanks. So are dolphins. Whales are in Sea World. This is not good. Whales can't hut. Whales can't swim normally. They are looked at by visitors. They can't be themselves. They shouldn't live like this. Whales should live in the wild. They should not live in glass cages. They don't live as long.





**Instructions** - Below are some very vague sentences, and their meaning is unknown. Rewrite the following sentences with specific and precise language. An example is done for you. **Answers will vary—sample responses.**

1. It is hot out. It is one hundred and one degrees outside. I am sweating.
2. The man walked. Charles walked to the grocery store to get bread and milk.
3. That person is nice. Mrs. Rostrum is very nice. She gave all of her students gifts.
4. The human left. Shelly ran out of her apartment building because she smelled smoke. She called 911.
5. That was fun. The school carnival was lots of fun. We played games, listened to a band, and ate cotton candy.
6. It is good. Dinner at the new restaurant was very good. I had the baked salmon and it was the best salmon I have ever tasted.
7. He went there. Joey went to school at the University of Notre Dame. He studied biology.
8. She is cool. Rebecca is cool standing outside for the bus, so she put her sweater on.
9. He got it from work. Miles caught the flu from a co-worker at the office. He is home sick today.
10. It is at 10:00. The test is at 10:00 am, I can't be late for it, or my teacher will take off points.

Below is an advertisement for dinner at a local restaurant. The announcement is unclear. Fix it, so customers know what they will be getting when they order.

Come in. This deal is cheap. A plate full will be little money. You get meat, a starch, a vegetable, and a fruit. For the extra money, you get a dessert. We have drinks too. We have lots of drinks.

Come right in to Sally's Cafe! Ask for Sally's meal deal. For just five dollars, you get your choice of chicken or steak, a baked potato or french fries, green beans, and fruit salad. For a dollar extra, you can get your choice of a fruit or cream pie. We make them fresh daily. We also have coffee, tea, soft drinks, and milkshakes.



**Instructions:** Read the paragraphs below. Make sure they are concise and precise. Rewrite the paragraphs making them precise and concise. **Sample**

1. Sea turtles are fascinating animals and have unique features. First of all, sea turtles have flippers that help them swim. They use their flippers to glide through the water with ease. According to Sea World, a sea turtle's flippers help go long distances at a fast pace. Sea turtles are a little awkward on land, but their flippers do help them push the sand away to get to their nests. The second unique feature that sea turtles have is on their head. They have an unusually shaped head, eyelids that protect their eyes like goggles, and a strong jaw. They can turn their head in all directions to help them spot danger. An article written by marine biologists at Sea World explains that their eyelids help them in the water. They protect their eyes from the salt in the water. They also have strong jaws that help them eat and crush through shells. The last unique feature of a sea turtle is its shell. Their shell is flexible and strong. It helps protect them from predators that want to harm them.

2. Recycling is extremely important because it helps the environment. People can recycle in their homes, at school, at restaurants, and even at work. There are recycle bins in many public places that remind people to recycle their plastic and paper; however, many people do not recycle. Many people are throwing away their paper and plastic. It is ending up in landfills. People should be reminded of the importance of recycling and should be educated on what materials can be recycled.

3. Where do whales belong? Do they belong in the vast ocean or behind glass cages at amusement parks like Sea World? Many whales are being taken out of their environment and placed behind glass tanks so people can pay money to see them. Taking whales out of their natural environment harms them. They can't hunt like normal, and instead, their food is just given to them. This is not natural for them. Also, in the ocean, they have all the space they want to spread out and swim. At places like Sea World, their areas are limited. Because of this, whales are not living long lives like they would in their natural habitat.